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On nursing home, candidates agree

Three District 1 Dems say Genesis should not manage county facility

By DAMIEN FISHER
Staff Writer

Despite having diverse backgrounds, all three candidates running for the two open House of Representatives seats in Sullivan County's District 1 agree that it is time for Genesis to leave the County Home.

With no Republicans on the ballot, Tuesday's primary between Democrats Carla M. Skinder of Cornish, Matthew Houde of Meriden and Robert Grimley of Grantham for two House of Representative seats in District 1 will likely decide the winners of November's general election as well.

Robert Grimley, a retired chemistry professor from Perdue University in Indiana, said he is running to bring his unique perspective as a scientist to Concord.

Grimley said his concerns about the

environment, education and the treatment of soldiers returning from overseas spurred him to run for office for the first time.

"We need another veterans' bill," he said.

Asked about the county's contract with

Genesis ElderCare to administer the nursing home, Grimley said he has a negative view of privatizing public institutions. Grimley said he is willing to be convinced Genesis is the right fit for the county, but he said he wants to make sure the residents at the home are receiving high quality care.

"We need to ask, 'Are we providing the service to people who need it,'" he said.

Grimley said he would also make sure the legislature works hard to find a solution to the education funding crisis. He said last week's New Hampshire Supreme Court decision that the legisla-

ture must define what an adequate education is will force the legislature to examine aspects of what is being taught in New Hampshire schools. The legislature must come up with a definition, rather than be forced to accept a definition from the courts, he said.

"I would prefer the Supreme Court not make that decision," he said.

Matthew Houde is the assistant dean at Vermont Law School. He said this will be his first foray into politics.

Houde, 37, said he is running because it is important for people of his generation to become involved in the political process. By

representing the people of Cornish, Plainfield and Grantham, Houde said he hopes to serve the state as a whole.

"I can't complain about the problems in New Hampshire without trying to fix them," he said.

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Matthew Houde

Democratic candidate,
Sullivan County District 1

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Houde said it is time to let Genesis go and have the county step in again to operate the nursing home. Houde said Genesis came in as a consultant to help the county financially.

"Genesis has done its job," he said.

The county was losing over \$1 million a year through the administration of the nursing home before Genesis was hired to take over. Now, the county pays the company \$200,000 a year and the home no longer loses money.

As for education, Houde said the legislature needs to work in a bipartisan manner to find a solution to the funding crisis. Houde said lawmakers need to work with education experts to define what an adequate education is.

"We need to reach common ground," he said.

Skinder is a nurse and the administrator of the Dayout program in Newport. With a masters degree in public health from Boston University, Skinder said she wants to represent the community on issues like health care and education while working in a bipartisan spirit.

"We spend a lot of money disagreeing and getting nothing done," she said.

Skinder agrees with Houde that Genesis has done its job as a consultant and it is time for it to leave. She said between the existing staff at the home and new staff the county will hire, there will be no need for the private company.

"I think it can be run properly if we find the right people,"

she said.

Finding the definition of an adequate education for Skinder means making sure every child has the same opportunities to a good education. Skinder said she too would seek the advice of education experts, but she would also look close to home for advice.

"My vote will be a community vote," she said.

The candidates hope to replace outgoing Democratic representatives Stephen Prichard of Grantham and Charlotte Houde-Quimby of Meriden. District 1 includes Cornish, Plainfield and Grantham.

Damien Fisher can be reached at 1-800-545-0347 ext. 139, or by e-mail at dfisher@eagletimes.com.